

# CONF YPG VS. CONF RECORD

by Phil Steele

Conference YPG vs Conference Record – Which teams are going up/down this year?

I have been tracking the Conference YPG vs conference record from 2001 all the way thru this past year so I have 24 years of research invested in this Metric. It seems like right now a lot of people use Metrics. Way back in 1995, I put the first Metric article (Metrics was not a term back then) into the magazine and it was Turnovers = Turnaround. That article had five years of research put into it and has stayed true to form with now 35 years of research into it and remains a 75% accurate indicator of teams either going up or down the next season. Since that first article, I have added a bunch of Metrics to the magazine. While I have referred to the Conference YPG in plenty of team write-ups, I have never put the actual article into my magazine, but it has had great success.

My hypothesis behind the metric were that teams that outgained their conference foes but finished with a losing record were much better than their record and would likely improve the next season. On the flip side, teams that were outgained but caught a lot of breaks and finished with a winning record would be overvalued and likely have a weaker record the next year.

I am a math guy and I had to come up with a formula to figure out how many yards translated into wins and or losses. Studying the many years of previous standings, I came up with 35 yards per game (ypg) per win above .500. My formula took the total ypg divided by the 35 ypg I credited for each game above .500 on the season and then added in half of the games played. As an example, a team that was 0 ypg on the year and played an eight-game schedule should have four wins on the year.  $\{0/35 = 0 + 4 \text{ (for half the games played)}\}$ . If a team played an eight-game schedule and went 8-0 they should be +140 ypg. If a team went 6-2, they should be +70 ypg. If a team played a nine-game schedule than +52.5 ypg would be the mark for a 6-3 season and a 9-0 season would be if a team was 158 ypg. It works the same for negative ypg which translates into losing record. In an eight-game schedule you would start with 4 wins (0 ypg) and then add in the negative number. If a team was -105 ypg and would be -3 or just 1 win for the season is what they should have achieved. Let me give you some numbers from past years so you get an understanding of how this Metric works.

In 2023 Washington made it to the National Title game and was undefeated Pac 12 play but were outgained during the regular season in conference play! That rated them a -4.65 on the YPG metric and they fell to 6-7 and a losing year! New Mexico St rated a -2.5 and went from 10-5 to 3-9! At the top of the chart last year Illinois was 5-7 and just 3-6 in Big Ten play but outgained their Big Ten foes by 26 ypg rating a +2/25 and they went from 5-7 to doubling their wins a 10-3! In 2022 some teams that were at the top of the YPG chart in the Going up Box were USC, Arizona and South Alabama. USC was just 4-8 in 2021 but they were actually +38 ypg in conference play! They rated a +2.58 and went 11-3! Arizona was 1-11 in 2021 but were just -17 ypg and rated a +3.01 in the YPG metric. They improved to 5-7 in 2022. South Alabama was just 5-7 in 2021 but were +30 ypg in Conference play and rated a +2.85 and improved to 10-3 in 2022! In 2021 Michigan St was the star of this metric. Somehow, somehow in 2021 they went 11-2 despite being -63 ypg in Big Ten play rating a -4.28 in this metric and they went just 5-7 in 2022!

In 2020 Tulsa was at the top of the Going Up Box for this metric. Tulsa was a poor 2-6 in conference play in 2019 but was only -5 ypg. Tulsa rated a +3.29 in my Conference YPG vs Wins. The next year in 2020 they were in the AAC title game vs Cincinnati. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Baylor was 8-1 in the Big 12 but only +23 ypg in 2019 which would be more indicative of a .500 year. The next year in 2020 Baylor went just 2-7.

In 2019 Florida Atlantic was at the top of the Going Up Box for this metric. FAU was +87 ypg in CUSA play in 2018 but just 3-5 in conference play. That had them at a +3.5 in my Conference YPG vs Wins metric. The next year 2020, FAU went 7-1 in CUSA play and won the conference. At the bottom of the metric was Northwestern. The Wildcats were an AMAZING 8-1 in conference play in 2018 but were ACTUALLY -43 ypg in Big Ten Play! The next year Northwestern rated a -4.3 in this metric and while they had similar yards at -58 ypg their record ended up just 1-8 for a major step back.

In 2018 Baylor was near the top of the charts at +2.4 as they were 1-8 in Big 12 play in 2017 but only -40 ypg and in 2018 Baylor improved to 7-6 overall and 4-5 in conference play. Akron rated a -4.7 on my Conference YPG vs Wins metric as in 2017

they were 6-3 in MAC play but did it with mirrors as they were outgained by 103 ypg in conference play. As you would expect, the next year Akron tumbled to 2-6 in the MAC and 4-8 overall.

In 2017 Michigan St was at the top of the Going Up box as in 2016 the Spartans were +35 ypg in conference play but not only finished with a losing record but were 1-8!! My Conference YPG vs Wins metric at a +4.5 and as you would expect the Spartans were much better in 2017 as they were from 3-9 overall to 10-3 and 7-2 in Conference play. Georgia Tech was in the Going Down Box for 2017 as in 2016 the Yellow Jackets were 9-4 overall but were -86 ypg in Conference play. In 2017 Georgia Tech dropped to 5-6 overall.

In 2023 Florida State was near the top of the chart as they were #1 in the ACC with +165 ypg but only finished with a 5-3 conference record so they graded a +3.7 and they ran the table and had an unbeaten season. Iowa State was just 4-8 in 2022 but were +52 ypg in conference play so they rated a super +4.99 on the YPG chart! The Cyclones improved to 7-6. TCU was near the bottom of the chart with a grade of -2.38 and they went from playing in the national title game to a losing season at 5-7.

Here is the chart for how this metric has done.

Minus 4.5 to -4.999	0	3	0	1	5	0
Minus 4 to -4.49999	2	5	0	3	10	0
Minus 3.5 to -3.999	2	12	0	5	22	0
Minus 3 to -3.49999	7	20	3	12	42	22.2%
Minus 2.5 to -2.999	12	36	3	24	78	23.5%
Minus 2 to -2.49999	30	67	13	54	145	27.1%
Minus 1.5 to -1.999	64	96	16	118	241	32.9%
Minus 1 to -1.49999	107	144	42	225	385	36.9%
Minus 0.5 to -0.999	121	150	23	346	535	39.3%
Minus 0.001 to -0.49999	165	155	48	511	690	42.5%
0	62	48	10	573	738	43.7%
0 to .4999	144	132	33	144	132	52.2%
.5 to .9999	164	120	32	308	252	55.0%
1	8	39	5	316	291	52.1%
1.001 to 1.49999	108	91	24	424	382	52.61%
1.5 to 1.99999	91	57	18	515	439	53.98%
2	6	18	0	521	457	53.27%
2.001 to 2.49999	64	32	8	585	489	54.47%
2.5 to 2.99999	33	13	2	618	502	55.18%
3 to 3.49999	20	10	3	638	512	55.48%
3.5 to 3.99999	15	4	2	653	516	55.86%
4 to 4.49999	4	5	2	657	521	55.77%
4.5 to 4.99999	2	1	0	659	522	55.80%
5 and up	2	0	1	661	522	55.87%

Since 2001 there have only been six teams rated at -4.5 or lower and of those 6 teams, five had a weaker record the next year. Now you know I think Bill Snyder was one of the greatest head coaches of all time. Somehow in 2011 his Kansas St Wildcats were -107 ypg yet, 6-2 in Big 12 play. That rated them a -6.051. The next year somehow Snyder had them 8-1 in the Big 12 including a win over Texas in the Big 12 title game to be the only team to buck their metric at that level. Last year there was a rare qualifier for that category in Washington which went 9-0 in the Pac 12 but were outgained during the regular season in conference play and rate a -4.65! Teams that are -2 or more have had a weaker or the same record 164 of 218 times for 75.2%. As you see on the chart the percentages work out perfectly with the records for teams in the negative category getting weaker as the negative points rise.

Here are the teams that make this year's GOING DOWN BOX. These teams only have a 24% chance of improving their record.

GOING UP		GOING DOWN	
UCF	+4.53	Marshall	-3.44
Auburn	+3.78	Navy	-3.18
Nevada	+2.94	Arkansas St	-2.74
Texas State	+2.83	Illinois	-2.73
UTSA	+2.73	Buffalo	-2.73
James Madison	+2.44	Fresno St	-2.66
Cincinnati	+2.25	Georgia Southern	-2.59
Louisiana Tech	+2.24	Duke	-2.56
Northern Illinois	+2.08	Vanderbilt	-2.2
		Colorado St	-2.14
		Charlotte	-2.1